

## **PREFACE**

On October 10, 2003, President George W. Bush announced the creation of a Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba that would “draw upon experts within our government to plan for Cuba’s transition from Stalinist rule to a free and open society [and] to identify ways to hasten the arrival of that day.”

This Commission was thus established to focus U.S. Government agencies on hastening the arrival of a transition in Cuba, and planning to respond to this opportunity. To that end, the Commission was responsible for (1) identifying additional measures by which the United States can help the Cuban people bring about an expeditious end of the Castro dictatorship; and (2) identifying U.S. Government programs that could assist the Cuban people during a transition.

In furtherance of the President’s mandate, the Commission developed and reviewed a comprehensive range of actions and programs that could be provided to hasten a transition as well as assist Cuba once a transition is underway. However, the Commission did not attempt to address current legal, regulatory, or budgetary barriers to assistance; consequently, the report may include recommendations to assist a free Cuba that may be prohibited or limited by current U.S. law or which will need to be funded in the future. In order to provide the full extent of the assistance outlined in this report, these legal prohibitions and budgetary limitations will need to be addressed. In particular, in order for assistance to be provided, the prerequisites for assistance to a transition government and a democratically elected government contained in the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act will need to be satisfied. The recommendations in this report regarding future assistance to Cuba can be implemented only if those requirements and standards are met.

Finally, the proposed programs and initiatives to assist a transition government in Cuba are prospective. They are meant to help prepare the U.S. Government to respond to a transition in Cuba. They are not intended to be a prescription for how a free Cuba organizes itself or what policies it decides ultimately to pursue; those decisions remain with the Cuban people as expressed by a free and sovereign Cuban government.

